Claims

1. A presence management system suitable for use in a multiple access communications network; by watching parties and watched parties, said presence management system comprising:-

(i) a first input arranged to receive notification requests from watching parties in use, each notification request being in respect of a watched party, and at least one of said parties comprising a plurality of individuals;

(ii) a second input arranged to receive information about events occurring in said multiple access communications system ;

(iii) a processor arranged such that in use, when information about an event relating to a particular watched party is received, any watching parties who made notification requests about that particular watched party, are notified about the event.

2. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 wherein said at least one party is a watching party.

3. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 wherein said at least one party is a watched party.

4. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 wherein at least one of said parties is an automated service.

5. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 wherein said at least one party comprising a plurality of

individuals, is arranged to be modified by one individual only.

6. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 wherein said presence management system is further arranged to provide information about the geographical location of a watched party in use, on the basis of said received information about events that occur in said multiple access communications network.

7. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 wherein said presence management system is further arranged to provide information about the current activity of a watched party, on the basis of said received information about events that occur in said multiple access communications network.

8. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 wherein said presence management system is arranged to provide information about types of connection that a watched party is able to participate in.

9. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 which is arranged to provide information about a change in the availability of a group of watched parties, only when a threshold number of members of said group of individuals have undergone a change in availability.

10. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 wherein said store of watched party information comprises watched party connection preferences.

11. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 that is arranged to provide a connection address for that watched party.

12. A presence management system as claimed in claim 11 wherein said connection address is only operable for a limited time.

13. A presence management system as claimed in claim 12 which is further arranged such that the request from the watching party is forwarded to the connection address provided, in such a way that the watching party has no access to that connection address.

14. A presence management system as claimed in claim 1 and wherein a plurality of said events are initiated by watched parties and comprise a communication via said multiple access network.

15. A computer program stored on a computer readable medium, said computer program being adapted to control a presence management system, said presence management system being suitable for use in a multiple access communications network by watched parties and watching parties, said computer program being arranged to control said presence management system such that:-

(i) notification requests are received from watching parties, each notification request being in respect of a watched party, and at least one of said parties comprising a plurality of individuals;

(ii) information is received about events occurring in said multiple access communications system; and

(iii) when information about an event relating to a particular watched party is received, any watching parties who made notification requests about that particular watched party, are notified about the event.

16. A multiple access communications network comprising a presence management system, for use by watching parties and watched parties, said presence management system comprising:-

(i) a first input arranged to receive notification requests from watching parties in use, each notification request being in respect of a watched party, and at least one of said parties comprising a plurality of individuals;

(ii) a second input arranged to receive information about events occurring in said multiple access communications system ;

(iii) a processor arranged such that in use, when information about an event relating to a particular watched party is received, any watching parties who made notification requests about that particular watched party, are notified about the event.

17. A method of operating a presence management system suitable for use in a multiple access communications

network, said presence management system being for use by watching parties and watched parties, at least one of said parties comprising a plurality of individuals, said method comprising the steps of:-

(i) receiving notification requests from watching parties in use, each notification request being in respect of a watched party;

(ii) receiving information about events that occur in said multiple access communications network, said events relating to said watched parties; and

(iii) when information about an event relating to a particular watched party is received, notifying any watching parties who made notification requests about that particular watched party, about the event.